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MEMORIAL

OF

MRS. GEORGE W. HEARD.

A

SERMON,

ON OCCASION OF THE

DEATH OF MRS. GEORGE W. HEARD,

PREACHED IN THE

FIRST CHURCH AT IPSWICH,

AUGUST 20, 1865,

BY

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PASTOR.

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SERMON.

1 PETER iii. 3, 4.

WHOSE ADORNING LET IT NOT BE THAT OUTWARD ADORNING OF PLAITING THE HAIR, AND OF WEARING OF GOLD, OR OF PUTTING ON OF APPAREL; BUT LET IT BE THE HIDDEN MAN OF THE HEART, IN THAT WHICH IS NOT CORRUPTIBLE, EVEN THE ORNAMENT OF A MEEK AND QUIET SPIRIT, WHICH IS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD OF GREAT PRICE.

THE true adorning of any human being is of the soul, which from within shines outwardly, irradiating and beautifying the person. And the gem most rare and beautiful, divinely chosen of all, to set on your brow, wife, mother, sister, is the ornament of a "meek and quiet spirit." It is "*hidden*," unobtrusive, that is, as opposed to an ostentatious display of costly apparel and glittering jewelry externally. It is "not *corruptible*." Shall we translate that rather, *sincere*, *genuine*—belonging to, a part of the real person? It is contrasted thus with those material ornaments, which are put on and off—as shams and substitutes often, for charms that are not, and which, in the presence of the true are dimmed, in its absence are most unseemly.

And what is this rare, most precious ornament, the centre jewel of the character in which God delights? It is well to inquire into the nature of the meek and quiet spirit. For while God highly prizes, the world, mistaking often, rates it lowest among gems. And the mistake is partly because of a narrow interpretation of what it is, and partly because the name, which Christ and angels call it by, is filched, sometimes, from the heavenly, and given to a spirit earthly, mean and servile, with which it has no kinship.

Now the meek and quiet spirit of scriptural commendation is not of man, but of God. The Holy Ghost is its author. It cometh through having seen God aright by a divine enlightening and spiritual regeneration. And having looked on God, and learned to know and love Him in the all-pervading presence of His wisdom, power and goodness, it beholds God in all things, and all things in God :—a God to be acknowledged, adored, and loved in all. Submitting with a hearty Amen to His sovereignty, it recognizes His Divine ordering in all that befalls the man, joyous, or adverse,—even when it comes through the instrumentality of fellow men.

And along with this view of the character and way of God, cometh also,—and this too, is by a gracious teaching,—that right view of one's self, as

a child of the Almighty least in our Father's house; as a sinner against Him undeserving of favor, deserving only evil, which, of itself, hushes complaining under trial, and awakes a grateful song in sunshine.

So then, the meek and quiet spirit is not indifference to suffering, or a blunted sensibility. It feels. There would be no virtue in it if it did not. Often, it feels most keenly. It is not the stifled sorrow of a child, who has cried itself into sobbing acquiescence with a superior will. Nor is it the cowing-down of a timid, unnerved soul, fawning upon the hand that smites. It is as far removed from any thing of the kind as from the irritated and stormy spirit of the proud and unsubdued, and the wise in their own conceits.

Is it a *passive* virtue? Well! But it has all the energy of the grandest conqueror beneath the sun. It is filial love and trust in God overcoming the world, and sin, and self. Does it seem to you a spirit that detracts from the nobility of nature? Nay! but the Christ of God has said—"He that humbleth himself, shall be exalted." And the exaltation is *within* the man—in the inspiration of God lifting the soul gloriously above the influences and considerations, that ordinarily affect mere earthlings. It touches heaven, and from a divine and heavenly stand-point, looks down, and rates

things earthly more as God does. O, my friend, believe me, the first throb of this gracious spirit in your bosom, will be the first throb of a true nobleness there.

Now, this all does not come from occasional, or superficial views of God, and a few lessons taught by a painful teacher. Long years, with some, are passed in the school of Christ, before the soul has come to live in that habitual and sweet composure, which the disturbances and vexations, the petty annoyances common to life, and even the insults and wrongs inflicted by men, and the chastisements of our heavenly Father's hand, though they ripple the spirit as they pass, cannot toss into a foam of unrest. Happy he, who learns betimes this secret hidden in God, of the happiest life on earth.

But it would be a mistake to suppose that a meek and quiet spirit is born only for *adversity*. Its connection in the text shows otherwise. For, you will notice, it is put in contrast with the adorning of a golden and silken prosperity, as amid all such external splendor itself more beautiful and bright. Most beautiful on the brow of her, who with all facilities given for external adornment, in her simplicity and lowliness of spirit, sets them aside, choosing the holier.

Humbly and quietly to receive the adulations and favors of the world; to move amid the fascina-

tions and seductions of wealth, honor, and pleasure, appealing strongly to the natural pride and vanity of a human bosom, yet to rise above it all in spirit, with a steadfast eye for holier good, is as rare and beautiful as the meek and quiet sufferance of evil. It is all, one and the same spirit—heavenly and born of God.

He, who has seen the King in his beauty, has seen created excellence die. To him "there is none good, but one, that is God!" no beauty, that he should desire but His; no greatness to awe him, beneath God's Throne. Looking at God habitually, lovingly, gold glitters, jewels flash; listening for the voice of God, pleasure sings, and never so wisely charms, flatterers and tempters call the soul away,—all, all in vain. They have their charms; they may have a certain real value. The meek and quiet spirit is not insensible to them. It affects no proud superiority to the favors of a kind fortune; as little does it take credit to itself because of them. It receives them gratefully, as the gift of God to one most unworthy. It loves Him most in them. He is brighter in their brightness; and sweeter in their sweetness. Joy in them to the meek and quiet spirit is joy, most of all, in God.

To these remarks upon the way of the meek and quiet spirit toward God and things earthly, let me add this only of its temper and bearing toward

others, our fellows. It is characterized by an Apostle in that most meaning epithet—"*gentle*," whose interpretation follows—"Shewing all meekness unto all men," both those that befriend, and those that wrong you. And again, in that other apostolic injunction you find its synonym—"Be kindly affectioned, one to another, with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another." Just the preference which comes from considering others' virtues and our own faults.

Do the beauty and heavenliness of this spirit require further illustration by words of mine? Do you not see in it already, somewhat of that peculiar adornment of the soul, which makes it so, in the sight of God of great price?

Behold its most beautiful, and only perfect illustration among men in the person of Jesus, when, heaven's eternal King though he was, he chose to himself that other name,—"Meek and Lowly One." And for the joy of our salvation set before him, he trod his own stars under his feet and became an "infant of days;"—in all his human life exemplifying, and by his teachings among men inculcating, the spirit of the text. As serene and unmoved in the grace of his meekness, when all the glory of the world lay a splendid, rejected bribe at his feet, as when "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers was dumb." As

meek when in him ancient prophecy received its fulfillment—"Behold thy King cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass," and over the strown palm branches, and amid the hosannas of the multitudes, he rode into Jerusalem; as when the third day after, the same crowd, crying, "Crucify, crucify him," led him out of the city to die. O thou, who hast bidden us—"Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls" —draw us unto Thyself. Teach us that sweet and gracious lesson, and give us thy rest:—rest from vain desires, and earthly and unholy yearnings; rest in vexations, sorrow and wrong. The rest of thy meekness.

Beloved, you anticipate my slow-moving pen,—and while I have been speaking of the spirit commended in the text, and exemplified in our dear Redeemer, you have been thinking, I doubt not, of her, whose recent decease,—late for the angels, too soon for us,—moves to a wide-spread grief. And you have been saying to yourselves,—in the front of her character was set the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, shining there most Christ-like. "In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born," says another, and of this disciple of Christ, as to her natural loveliness of character, yet more, as purified

and perfected by grace, the same expression may be used, sweeter in its figurative, than even in its literal meaning. She drooped with the lowliness of the lily, bending over and looking into her own heart, pure as few others, wishing and praying that it might be purer, shrinking from praise. She would reprove me, I know, if I speak of her as justly I may. Yet, for the sake of her Saviour and exemplar, and to his praise, let me write on the shrinking leaves of the lily, if no more than its Christian name.

Mrs. Elizabeth Ann Heard, was born in Ipswich, Mass., July 20, 1802. She was the daughter of Robert Farley and Susannah his wife, who were well known in their day, and are remembered still as among the prominent and most respected citizens of the place. She was united in marriage to Mr. George W. Heard, November 6, 1823, and in this connection lived happily until he was called before her to a heavenly home, April 21, 1863. She became a member of the First Church of Christ in Ipswich, by a public profession of her faith in the Redeemer, June 6, 1830; and from that time to the day of her death, (August 10, 1865,) adorned her Christian profession with the spirit of the text.

Providence had favored Mrs. Heard with an abundance of the good things of this life; but how

gracefully and meekly she bore herself in her prosperity, you know. Never elated by the favor of earthly fortune, or beguiled into attaching to them an unreal importance; never arrogating to herself more of consequence because of them. She could enjoy with a true, refined taste, all that was choice and beautiful in art and nature within and around her happy dwelling. She prized it at its real value—and that was not small. But in her home of all delights was a chamber dearer than all, "whose window opened toward the sun-rising," through which she could look by faith into a mansion in her Father's house, ready for her, richer in its adornments, and beautiful in holiness. And in the beauty and glory of it, even that which to our eye is very beautiful in nature, or in art exquisitely and curiously wrought, grew dim to her beholding and less to be desired.

In her person, with all facilities for the gratification of vanity, Mrs. Heard most admirably exemplified the description of the thoroughly Christian woman of the text. Careful most, to be as the King's daughter, "all glorious within."

Not uncommonly, they, who occupy favored positions in society, become with others in the humbler walks of life, objects of envy and jealousy, perhaps of detraction. It was not so with Mrs. Heard. The simplicity of her character, the charm

of her meek and quiet spirit disarmed envy and prejudice. And with this gracefully blended a certain natural dignity, ennobled more by grace, which commanded a willing respect from all. The rudest will concede to true nobleness of character the reverence and love they will deny to mere social position. There is a royalty of nature and a glory of grace, which looks down on kings. It was hers.

Her meek and quiet spirit showed itself, moreover, in her low estimate of her Christian attainments and graces. She never suspected herself to be the eminent Christian she was. Her religion sat easily and gracefully upon her, pervading her whole air and bearing; with none of the awkwardness of something put on to meet company in. It was *herself.* It was love warbling over the strings of her own soul, and voicing itself most kindly and fittingly for others. It was a religion most unselfish. She lived for others.

So much a life-habit had this become with Mrs. Heard, that in her last sickness, forgetful of self, even in much bodily distress, with the delicate thoughtfulness which had always been peculiar to her, she watched each sign of weariness in those who ministered to her, and provided for the rest and comfort of her humblest attendant.

Giving of what God had given her was with

Mrs. Heard a holy passion. It was strong in death. From her sick bed she sent to other sick, and to the bereaved, ready provision for their wants. The last liberal gifts of a death-struck hand, and of a charity which could not die, were for a distant missionary, and for a young man struggling against poverty, to fit himself for the ministry of the Lord Jesus, in another denomination of Christians than her own.

And now, I can not think, that death has destoyed the divine relish and habit formed here under the training of Him, who has taught us, both by example and precept—"It is more blessed to give than to receive." Nay, rather, it had but served to confirm and gratify them more by the introduction of that ripe, unselfish soul into the broader scenes, the higher and holier ministries of heaven. Jesus does not make a Christian out of a sinner, and when He has just fitted him, and made him fully ripe for a glorious service, turn his life-training into a failure, limiting him to such work, imperfect at the best, as he can render here. The Saviour has a higher use for it. Moreover, the spirit of Christian benevolence,—a spirit of holiness,—itself immortal, beyond death, must thirst still, and with more than its earthly zest and longing, for the higher exercise of the habit formed under the care of Jesus here.

And so—it is not a mere vison of fancy, it is the vision of an intelligent faith in the gracious nature of a redeemed soul, and in the God of our salvation, which beholds now those two disciples of Jesus, who were so pre-eminent, and so happily one in the spirit and work of benevolence here, not long divided, the joint life-work of earth renewed, joyfully ministering again in the service of their Lord, and the object of His saving love.

I come now to speak of the days of sorrow here, for our departed friend. Mrs. Heard was the beautiful complement of her husband, winding his strong, granitic character about with the quiet beauty of her gentle graces, till the sweet, flowering thing clung not more to its firm support, than clung the hardy granite to its loving companion. They so grew to each other, and became so one in their views, their counsels, and their likings ; above all, so one in their love for Jesus, and common service for his cause, that when they parted, "they could not part. Those souls were one." And for the two years in which they have lived apart, the one in heaven, the other on earth,—she has gone sorrowing, and so sadly missing his companionship, not only in the common walks of home life, in the love and service of Jesus more, that not the tenderest affection of the friends remaining could make her forget, or cease to ask for the dearer, away.

Yet though this unforgotten sorrow has fed upon her very life,—as I am constrained to believe,—and aided, if it has not indeed produced her fatal disease, her meek and quiet spirit maintained the mild and steady lustre, that made it her divinest ornament in her prosperity and health. Seen of all in the sad, gentle patience of her hope and serenity of trust in her Redeemer, she uttered no lament, while the lonely heart, we knew, wept inwardly. In the mists of the valley, as she went slowly down, she kept it,—Christ's dear jewel, full in front, steadily shining.

From the effects of her disease Mrs Heard could not converse much as life drew to its close. When asked at one time, "Can you quietly leave the question 'What shall be the result of this sickness,' with Jesus to decide?" She replied, "I can. I trust all to Him, and am at peace." Then after a pause, as if reviewing the question, adding,—"If I could not trust Him, how miserable I should be." As I entered her chamber one morning, a few days before her death, holding out her hand to me, she said, "My dear Pastor,—how I wish I could talk with you, but I can not." And so she retired very much within herself, and talked with Jesus more, and let the spirit, that was in her, speak for itself in the touching, loving submission of her whole look and manner, as she lay, waiting the will of

her Lord. And so she passed from us, wearing the ornament of her meek and quiet spirit into heaven with her.

Beloved, if in speaking to you of this dear friend, I have dwelt more particularly upon her character, than is my ordinary practice at the death of a church member, it is because I have thought it due especially to her Saviour. Other sisters have gone before, who have beautifully exemplified the like spirit in their different positions in life. Their love and faith, and good works, will not be forgotten, nor cease to live in our thanksgivings to the Redeemer, who wrought their holy graces in them, and permitted them to be to us so long in our homes, and in our Church, our loving, faithful helpers, and blessed examples. In the heaven, whose gate ever stands open to the eye of Christian faith, and for the entrance of Christ's redeemed, sainted forms appear, grouped around their newly-arrived sister; sweet, seraphic faces look down on us. From our dusky valley we send back to them our "All-Hail." From among these all I have singled out one, and the last glorified, for your special notice, because our Lord had, Himself, singled her out before, and placed her where He would have her seen and known. By peculiar natural endowments and personal attractions, by her native loveliness and dignity,

to all which grace gave a higher culture, and added diviner charms,—and by the special favors of God's providence moreover, Mrs. Heard was placed so prominently before us, that we could not but see and acknowledge a rare jewel of heaven's own make and polish. Meekness and lowliness are not the natural, or most common ornaments of such as the world flatters. Praise to the grace, which in her has given us this, their beautiful illustration. We thank God that He gave her a home with us. Happy tears start when we think what she was to us once, and what she is before the Throne of God now; and how soon (if our faith be like hers,) we shall meet her there.

I come to a close. I have said, that a meek and quiet spirit is the special ornament of woman. It is moreover her main element of power. Woman needs especially to be a disciple of the meek and lowly One. She is not complete until she is complete in Christ. But stop not there. For *all*, dear friends, the meek and quiet spirit is God's chosen ornament—in his sight of great price. It is the spirit, beside, which beyond all mere activities in the Christian life, honors God, brings willing subjects to his throne; and glory to his grace. And often, for the lack of it in its due exhibition, activi-

ties the most earnest for Christ fail of their object, do no good, and bring harm.

Yet more,—not only is the spirit of which I speak, an ornament of grace and beauty, and an element of power—itself power,—for you, for me, for every one, it is to us an eternal *necessity*. By it we enter heaven. That lesson of our Lord and Saviour,—"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, I am meek and lowly of heart,"—it is the one great lesson of probation. It involved the soul's everlasting salvation. Come, my friend, let us learn it at the Cross of Jesus, meekly bending there. And from that Cross we shall have to go, meekly bending still, all our way, in through the gate, which, not our own merit, but Christ's, opens for us into the presence of God and the Lamb. *There*, be it ours, in God's mercy, to meet those, our dear ones, who through faith and patience, already have inherited the promises. And to His Name be all the praise, in Christ Jesus.